

LETTER
FROM
THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,
TO
THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NAVAL COMMITTEE,
TRANSMITTING
SUNDRY DOCUMENTS FROM CAPTAIN MACDONOUGH,
RELATING
TO THE CAPTURE OF THE BRITISH FLEET
ON
LAKE CHAMPLAIN.

OCTOBER 4, 1814.

Printed by order of the Senate of the United States.

WASHINGTON CITY;

PRINTED BY ROGER C. WEIGHTMAN.

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MAINTENANCE

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1881

LETTER, &c.

Navy Department,

October 3, 1814.

SIR,

IN compliance with your request, I have now the honor, to enclose copies of all the documents received from captain Macdonough, in relation to the brilliant and extraordinary victory achieved by the United States' squadron under his command, over that of the enemy in Plattsburgh Bay, on lake Champlain.

This action, like that of its prototype on lake Erie, cannot be portrayed in language corresponding with the universal and just admiration inspired by the exalted prowess, consummate skill, and cool, persevering intrepidity, which will ever distinguish this splendid and memorable event.

This like those brilliant naval victories which preceded it, has its peculiar features, which mark it with a distinct character. It was fought at anchor. The firm, compact, and well formed line; the preparations for all the evolutions of which the situation was susceptible, and the adroitness and decisive effect with which they were performed in the heat of battle, mark no less the judgment which planned, than the valor and skill displayed in the execution.

All these are heightened by the contemplation of a vigorous and greatly superior foe, moving down upon this line, in his own time, selecting his position, and choosing his distance; animated by the proximity of a powerful army in co-operation, and stimulated by the settled confidence of victory.

To view it in the abstract, it is not surpassed by any naval victory on record; to appreciate its results, it is perhaps one of the most important events in the history of our country.

That it will be justly estimated, and the victors duly honored by the councils of the nation, the justice and liberality hitherto displayed on similar occasions, is a sufficient pledge.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully, sir,

Your obedient servant,

W. JONES.

The hon. Charles Tate,

Chairman of the naval committee of the senate.

(Copy.)

United States' ship Saratoga, off

Plattsburgh, Sept. 11, 1814.

SIR,

The Almighty has been pleased to grant us a signal victory on lake Champlain, in the capture of one frigate, one brig, and two sloops of war of the enemy.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully, sir,

Your obedient servant,

T. MACDONOUGH, *com.*

Hon. William Jones, secretary of the navy.

(Copy.)

United States' ship Saratoga,

at anchor off Plattsburgh, Sept. 13, 1814.

SIR,

By lieut. commandant Cassin I have the honor to convey to you the flags of his Britannic ma-

jeisty's late squadron, captured on the 11th inst. by the United States' squadron, under my command. Also, my despatches relating to that occurrence, which should have been in your possession at an earlier period, but for the difficulty in arranging the different statements.

The squadron under my command now lies at Plattsburgh—it will bear of considerable diminution, and leave a force sufficient to repel any attempt of the enemy in this quarter. I shall wait your order what to do with the whole or any part thereof, and, should it be consistent, I beg you will favor me with permission to leave the lake, and place me under the command of commodore Decatur, at New York. My health, (being some time on the lake,) together with the almost certain inactivity of future naval operations here, are among the causes for this request of my removal.

I have the honor to be,

Sir, with much respect,

Your most ob't servant,

T. MACDONOUGH.

Hon. William Jones, secretary
of the navy, Washington.

(Copy.)

United States' ship Saratoga,
Plattsburgh Bay, Sept. 11, 1814.

SIR,

I have the honor to give you the particulars of the action which took place on the 11th inst. on this lake.

For several days the enemy were on their way to Plattsburgh, by land and water; and it being understood that an attack would be made at the same time by their land and naval forces, I deter-

mined to await, at anchor, the approach of the latter.

At 8 A. M. the look-out boat announced the approach of the enemy. At 9, he anchored in a line ahead, at about 300 yards distance from my line; his ship opposed to the Saratoga, his brig to the Eagle, captain Robert Henley, his galleys, thirteen in number, to the schooner, sloop, and a division of our galleys; one of his sloops assisting their ship and brig, the other assisting their galleys. Our remaining galleys with the Saratoga and Eagle. In this situation, the whole force, on both sides, became engaged: the Saratoga suffering much from the heavy fire of the Confiance. I could perceive at the same time, however, that our fire was very destructive to her. The Ticonderoga, lieutenant commandant Cassin, gallantly sustained her full share of the action. At half past 10 o'clock, the Eagle, not being able to bring her guns to bear, cut her cable, and anchored in a more eligible position, between my ship and the Ticonderoga, where she very much annoyed the enemy, but unfortunately leaving me exposed to a galling fire from the enemy's brig. Our guns on the starboard side being nearly all dismounted, or not managcable, a stern anchor was let go, the bower cable cut, and the ship winded with a fresh broadside on the enemy's ship, which soon after surrendered. Our broadside was then sprung to bear on the brig, which surrendered in about 15 minutes after.

The sloop that was opposed to the Eagle, had struck some time before, and drifted down the line; the sloop which was with their galleys having struck also: three of their galleys are said to be sunk, the others pulled off. Our galleys were about obeying, with alacrity, the signal to follow them, when all the vessels were reported to me to

be in a sinking state; it then became necessary to annul the signal to the galleys, and order their men to the pumps.

I could only look at the enemy's galleys going off in a shattered condition, for there was not a mast in either squadron that could stand to make sail on; the lower rigging, being nearly all shot away, hung down as though it had been just placed over the mast heads.

The *Saratoga* had fifty-five round shot in her hull; the *Confiance* one hundred and five. The enemy's shot passed principally just over our heads, as there were not twenty whole hammocks in the nettings at the close of the action, which lasted, without intermission, two hours and twenty minutes.

The absence and sickness of lieut. Raymond Perry, left me without the services of that excellent officer; much ought fairly to be attributed to him for his great care and attention in disciplining the ship's crew, as her first lieutenant. His place was filled by a gallant young officer, lieutenant Peter Gamble, who, I regret to inform you, was killed early in the action. Acting lieutenant Vallette worked the 1st and 2d divisions of guns with able effect. Sailing master Brum's attention to the springs, and in the execution of the order to wind the ship, and occasionally at the guns, meets with my entire approbation; also captain Young's commanding the acting marines, who took his men to the guns. Mr. Beale, purser, was of great service at the guns, and in carrying my orders throughout the ship, with midshipman Montgomery. Master's mate Joshua Justin, had the command of the third division; his conduct during the action was that of a brave and correct officer. Midshipmen Monteath, Graham, Williamson,

Platt, Thwing, and acting midshipman Baldwin, all behaved well, and gave evidence of their making valuable officers.

The Saratoga was twice set on fire by hot shot from the enemy's ship.

I close, sir, this communication with feelings of gratitude for the able support I received from every officer and man attached to the squadron which I have the honor to command.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

T. MACDONOUGH.

Hon. William Jones, secretary of the navy.

P. S. Accompanying this is a list of killed and wounded, a list of the prisoners, and a precise statement of both forces engaged. Also letters from captain Henley and lieutenant commandant Cassin.

T. M.

(Copy.)

United States' ship Saratoga,
September 13, 1814.

SIR,

I have the honor to enclose you a list of the killed and wounded on board the different vessels of the squadron under your command in the action of the 11th inst.

It is impossible to ascertain correctly the loss of the enemy. From the best information received from the British officers, from my own observations, and from various lists found on board the *Confiance*, I calculate the number of men on board of that ship at the commencement of the action at 270, of whom 180, at least, were killed and wounded; and on board the other captured vessels at least 80 more, making in the whole, killed

9
or wounded, 260. This is doubtless short of the real number, as many were thrown overboard from the *Confiance* during the engagement.

The muster books must have been thrown overboard, or otherwise disposed of, as they are not to be found.

I am, sir, respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
GEORGE BEALE, jr. *purser*.

Thomas Macdonough, esq. commanding
United States' squadron on lake Champlain.

Return of killed and wounded on board the United States' squadron on lake Champlain, in the engagement with the British fleet, on the 11th of September, 1814.

SHIP SARATOGA.

KILLED.

Peter Gamble,	lieutenant.
Thomas Butler,	quarter gunner.
James Norberry,	boatswain's mate.
Abraham Davis,	quarter master.
William Wyer,	sailmaker.
William Brickell,	seaman.
Peter Johnson,	do.
John Coleman,	do.
Benjamin Burrill,	ordinary seaman.
Andrew Parmlee,	do.
Peter Post,	seaman.
David Bennett,	do.
Ebenezer Johnson,	do.
Joseph Couch,	landsman.
Thomas Stephens,	seaman.
Randall M'Donald,	ordinary seaman.
John White,	do.
Samuel Smith,	seaman.
Thomas Malony,	ordinary seaman.

Andrew Nelson,	seaman.
John Sellack,	do.
Peter Hanson,	do.
Jacob Laraway,	do.
Edward Moore,	do.
Jerome Williams,	ordinary seaman.
James Carlisle,	marine.
John Smart,	seaman.
Earl Hannemon,	do.

Total, 28.

WOUNDED.

James M. Baldwin,	acting midshipman.
Joseph Barron,	pilot.
Robert Gary,	quarter gunner.
George Cassin,	quarter master.
John Hollingsworth,	seaman.
Thomas Robinson,	do.
Purnall Smith,	do.
John Ottiwell,	do.
John Thompson,	ordinary seaman.
William Tabee,	do.
Williams Williams,	do.
John Roberson,	seaman.
John Towns,	landsman.
John Shays,	seaman.
John S. Hammond,	do.
James Barlow,	do.
James Nagle,	ordinary seaman.
John Lanman,	seaman.
Peter Colberg,	do.
William Newton,	ordinary seaman.
Neil J. Heidmont,	seaman.
James Steward,	do.
John Adams,	landsman.
Charles Rathe,	seaman.
Benjamin Jackson,	marine.

Jesse Vanhorn,	marine.
Joseph Ketter,	do.
Samuel Pearson,	do.

Total 29.

BRIG EAGLE.

KILLED.

Peter Vandermere,	master's mate.
John Ribero,	seaman.
Jacob Lindman,	do.
Perkins Moore,	ordinary seaman.
James Winship,	do.
Thomas Anwright,	do.
Nace Wilson,	do.
Thomas Lewis,	boy.
John Wallace,	marine.
Joseph Heaton,	do.
Robert Stratton,	do.
James M. Hale,	musician.
John Wood,	do.

Total 13.

WOUNDED.

Joseph Smith,	lieutenant.
William A. Spencer,	acting lieutenant.
Francis Breeze,	master's mate.
Abraham Walters,	pilot.
William C. Allen,	quarter master.
James Duick,	quarter gunner.
Andrew M'Ewen,	seaman.
Zebediah Concklin,	do.
Joseph Valentine,	do.
John Hartley,	do.
John Micklan,	do.
Robert Buckley,	do.
Aaron Fitzgerald,	boy.
Purnall Boice,	ordinary seaman.
John N. Craig,	seaman.

John M'Kenney,	seaman.
Matthew Scriver,	marine.
George Mainwaring,	do.
Henry Jones,	do.
John M'Carty,	do.

Total 20.

SCHOONER TICONDEROGA.**KILLED.**

John Stansbury,	lieutenant.
John Fisher,	boatswain's mate.
John Atkinson,	do.
Henry Johnson,	seaman.
Deodrick Think,	marine.
John Sharp,	do.

Total 6.

WOUNDED.

Patrick Cassin,	seaman.
Ezekiel Goud,	do.
Samuel Sawyer,	do.
William Le Count,	do.
Henry Collins,	do.
John Condon,	marine.

Total 6.

SLOOP PREBLE.**KILLED.**

Rogers Carter,	acting sailing master.
Joseph Rowe,	boatswain's mate.

WOUNDED.

None.

GUN BOAT BORER.**KILLED.**

Arthur W Smith,	purser's steward.
Thomas Gill,	boy.
James Day,	marine.

WOUNDED.

Ebenezer Cobb, corporal of marines.

GUN BOAT CENTIPEDE.

WOUNDED.

James Taylor, landsman.

GUN BOAT WILMER.

WOUNDED.

Peter Frank, seaman.

RECAPITULATION.

	Killed.	Wounded.
Saratoga,	28	29
Eagle,	13	20
Ticonderoga,	6	6
Preble,	2	
Borer,	3	1
Centipede		1
Wilmer,		1
	52	58

GUN BOATS.

Nettle,
 Allen,
 Viper,
 Burrows,
 Ludlow,
 Alwyn,
 Ballard,

} none killed or wounded.

GEO. BEALE, jr.

Purser.

Approved,

T. MACDONOUGH.

List of prisoners captured on the 11th September, and
sent to Greenbush.

OFFICERS.

Daniel Pring,*	captain.
Hicks,	lieutenant.
Creswick,	do.
Robinson,	do.
M'Ghie,	do.
Drew,	do.
Hornby,	do.
Childs,	do. marines.
Fitzpatrick,	do. 39th regt.
Bryden,	sailing master.
Clark,	master mate.
Simmonds,	do.
Todd,	surgeon.
Giles,	purser.
Guy,	captain's clerk.
Dowell,	midshipman.
Aire,	do.
Bondell,	do.
Toorke,	do.
Kewstra,	do.
Davidson,	boatswain.
Elvin,	gunner.
Mickell,	do.
Gox,	carpenter.
Parker,	purser.
Martin,	surgeon.
M'Cabe,	assistant surgeon.

340 seamen.

47 wounded men paroled.

* On parole.

**Statement of the American force engaged on the 11th
September, 1814.**

Saratoga,	8 long 24 pounders,		
	6 42 pound carronades,		
	12 32 do. do.	Total, 26 guns.	
Eagle,	12 32 do. do. & 8 long 18 prs.	20	
Ticonderoga,	8 long 12 pounders,		
	4 18 do.		
	5 32 pound carronades.	17	
Preble,	7 long 9 pounders,	7	

Ten galleys, viz.

Allen,	1 long 24 pr. & 1 18 pr.	Columbiad,	2
Burrows,	1 24 do.	do.	2
Borer,	1 24 do.	do.	2
Nettle,	1 24 do.	do.	2
Viper,	1 24 do.	do.	2
Centipede,	1 24 do.	do.	2
Ludlow,	1 12 pounder,		1
Wilmer,	1 12 do.		1
Alwyn,	1 12 do.		1
Ballard,	1 12 do.		1

Guns, 86

RECAPITULATION.

14 long 24 pounders,
6 42 pound carronades,
29 32 do. do.
12 long 18 pounders,
12 12 do.
7 9 do.
6 18 pound Columbiads.

Total, 86 guns.

T. MACDONOUGH.

**Statement of the enemy's force engaged on the 11th Sep-
tember, 1814.**

Frigate Confiance,	27 long 24 pounders,	
	4 32 pound carronades,	
	6 24 do. do.	
	2 1. 18 prs. on b. deck.	Total 39 guns.
Brig Linnet,	16 long 12 pounders,	16

Sloop Chub,*	10 18 pound carronades,	
	1 long 6 pounder,	11
Finch,*	6 18 pound carronades,	
	1 18 do. Columbiad,	
	4 long 6 pounders,	11

Thirteen galleys, viz.

Sir James Yeo,	1 l. 24 pr. & 1 32 p. carronade	2
Sir George Prevost,	1 do. do.	2
Sir Sidney Beckwith,	1 do. do.	2
Broke,	1 l. 18 pr. & 1 32 p. do.	2
Murray,	1 do. & 1 18 p. do.	2
Wellington,	1 do.	1
Tecumsech,	1 do.	1
Name unknown,	1 do.	1
Drummond,	1 32 pound carronade,	1
Simcoe,	1 do. do.	1
Unknown,	1 do. do.	1
Do.	1 do. do.	1
Do.	1 do. do.	1

RECAPITULATION.

Total, 95

30 long 24 pounders,	
7 18 do.	
16 12 do.	
5 6 do.	
13 32 pound carronades,	
6 24 pound do.	
17 18 do. do.	
1 18 do. Columbiad.	

Total, 95 guns.

T. MACDONOUGH.

* These sloops were formerly the United States' Growler and Eagle.

(Copy)

United States' brig Eagle,
Plattsburgh, Sept. 12, 1814.

SIR,

I am happy to inform you that all my officers and men acted bravely, and did their duty in the battle of yesterday, with the enemy.

I shall have the pleasure of making a more particular representation of the respective merits of my gallant officers, to the honorable the secretary of the navy.

I have the honor to be,

Respectfully, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

ROBERT HENLEY.

P. S. We had thirty-nine round shot in our hull, (mostly 24 pounders,) four in our lower masts, and we were well peppered with grape. I enclose my boatswain's report.

(Copy)

United States' schooner Ticonderoga,
Plattsburgh Bay, Sept. 12, 1814.

SIR,

It is with pleasure I state, that every officer and man under my command, did their duty yesterday.

Yours respectfully,

STEPHEN CASSIN,

Lieutenant commandant.

Commodore Thomas Macdonough.

(Copy.)

United States' ship Saratoga,
September 15, 1814, off Plattsburgh.

SIR,

As Providence has given into my command the squadron on lake Champlain, of which you were, (after the fall of captain Downie,) the commanding officer, I beg you will, after the able conflict you sustained, and evidence of determined valor you evinced on board his Britannic majesty's brig

Linnet, until the necessity of her surrender, accept of your enclosed parole, not to serve against the United States, or their dependencies, until regularly exchanged.

I am, &c. &c.

T. MACDONOUGH.

To captain Pring, royal navy.

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